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REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Letter dated 16 April 2002 from the head of the delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on Human Rights addressed to the Chairperson of the Commission

On 5 April 2002 the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution 2002/1 entitled "Situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory". The United Kingdom delegation abstained in the vote. As you will recall, the Commission ran out of time and not all delegations had the opportunity to explain their votes.

I attach the explanation of vote that the United Kingdom had prepared, but were unable to deliver. Please could you circulate it as an official document of the Commission.*

(Signed): Andrey GLOVER
Ambassador
Head of delegation

* Reproduced as received in the language of submission, in English only.

Annex

The United Kingdom abstained from voting on the resolution on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory under item 4 of the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights.

The United Kingdom would like to thank the High Commissioner for Human Rights for her efforts to improve respect for human rights and welcomed her statement to the Commission.

The United Kingdom is greatly concerned about the situation in the Occupied Territories and the deaths and injuries to innocent Israelis and Palestinians. The United Kingdom has urged both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to take steps to establish a meaningful ceasefire.

The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have repeatedly called on Israel to withdraw its forces from the towns under the authority of the Palestinian Authority. Israeli actions are only contributing to the escalation of the crisis in the Middle East. The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the evidence that medical and humanitarian assistance is being prevented from reaching those in need by the Israel Defence Forces. The United Kingdom has raised its concerns in the strongest terms to the Government of Israel, and urged Israel to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and investigate allegations of misconduct.

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have also called on the Palestinian Authority over the course of the last 18 months to do more to prevent further terrorist attacks. The relentless onslaught of suicide bombers must end. As President Bush said on 4 April, suicide bombers are murderers. The United Kingdom condemns them. The United Kingdom calls again on the Palestinian Authority to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring the protection of the life of Israeli civilians.

The United Kingdom has called on Israel and the Palestinian Authority to implement United Nations Security Resolutions 1397, 1402 and 1403, including the establishment of a ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the implementation of the Tenet and Mitchell recommendations. The United Kingdom welcomed President Bush's decision to send Secretary of State Powell to the region and will support United States peace efforts in any way it can.

The United Kingdom abstained from voting on this resolution because of its unbalanced description of the humanitarian situation on the ground. The United Kingdom insists that the Commission work constructively for improvements in human rights. The United Kingdom was disappointed that the resolution failed to explicitly state that the Palestinian Authority has responsibilities to stop the suicide bombings which have contributed so terribly to the escalation of this crisis. Nor did the resolution acknowledge the suffering of innocent Israelis. Such an omission is unjust and contrary to the principles of the Commission. The United Kingdom could not support it.

This text also called for the establishment of a one-sided international monitoring presence. The United Kingdom has long advocated the deployment of a monitoring mechanism, accepted by both parties, which would help the parties sustain a ceasefire and implement the Tenet security work-plan and the Mitchell recommendations. A mechanism will only be effective if it has the agreement of both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The United Kingdom could not support a resolution which called for the establishment of a mechanism with the aim of monitoring human rights violations only by one party against the other, and which fails to recognize the need for the consent of both parties.